

Silk Crimson Layers

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Summary: ONESHOT. Where Toshizo recites poetry and Chizuru relishes his gentle gaze. Set during OVA 5, when Toshizo brings Chizuru, who is dressed as a geiko, back to the Shinsengumi compound.

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Summary: Set during OVA 5, when Toshizo brings Chizuru, who is dressed as a geiko, back to the Shinsengumi compound. Souji leaves the two of them alone and Toshizo orders Chizuru to hide so that returning members of the Shinsengumi won't catch sight of her. Where Toshizo recites poetry and Chizuru relishes his gentle gaze.

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><p>Oneshot

Chizuru waited for the footsteps of the Shinsengumi recruits to fade before sliding the door open slightly and calling out to her vice commander.

"Hijikata-san?"

She hesitated before peering out. The moon was bright and she could see the exasperated expression on his face.

"You better stay there for a little longer," Toshizo responded, unfolding his arms and stepping towards her hiding place. He settled on the porch in front of the room Chizuru was in.

"Stay?" she asked.

He looked around furtively before turning towards her again. "Many soldiers return at this hour. It is almost curfew." After

deliberating for for a moment longer, he added, "I will stay with you until it is safe for you to return to your room."

She smiled and uttered a quiet thank you.

The time passed quickly in silence after that. Some more men returned home, but no one suspected that their vice commander was hiding Chizuru in the room behind him.

Chizuru allowed her thoughts to wander. Hijikata-san and all the other captains always went to such great lengths to hide the fact that she was a female, she mused. But in reality, she guessed that most of the men already suspected â€" at least, the ones who had been around for a while. She often wondered if much would really change if they allowed her to reveal her identity.

"Yukimura," Toshizo murmured. "Are you doing alright?"

"Yes," she responded immediately. And after another minute of silence, she called out to him again. "Hijikata-san?"

"Hm?"

Chizuru smiled when she saw him tilt his head slightly to look back towards her. He was always looking back towards her this way. To her, this gaze of his felt warm. The times he sat directly across from her and stared her in the eye were usually serious times, like when he was questioning her â€" or like the other day, when she had asked permission to masquerade as a Shimabara geiko and act as a Shinsengumi spy.

She stifled a giggle and asked instead, "Are you thinking of a poem right now?"

"What?" he blurted out in surprise, turning towards her.

Chizuru smiled and slid the door open further so that she could see his face more fully.

"A haiku. Like the other morning, about the snowy garden."

Toshizo was grateful for the dark that hid the heat that rose to his cheeks. Souji hadn't stopped teasing him since that morning the two of them overheard his haiku recital. It was his secret hobby â€" a hobby not befitting a man who was not even of true samurai rank. That he had been discovered left him considerably flustered.

"Of course not," he replied gruffly, sliding his arms into his sleeves. "Soldiers do not spend time thinking up poems when there are more serious, dangerous issues at hand. What you and Souji overheard was a rareâ€| chance occurrence."

Chizuru decided it was best not to mention that she'd caught glimpses of a small notebook that she suspected Toshizo was using to keep record of haiku.

"That's a shame," she murmured, careful to keep the teasing note out of her voice. "It was a very nice poem. I would have liked to hear more of Hijikata-san's haiku."

Toshizo felt his heart pause a beat. He turned around abruptly and did not respond.

He could not see but rather sensed that Chizuru was disappointed that he was not choosing to continue their conversation. Inwardly, he scowled at the agitation her words caused. Women! How easily they influenced the moods of men.

He spared a brief glance backwards. She was stifling a yawn. Toshizo turned to hide his smile. Chizuru's antics certainly didn't match her beautiful geiko appearance, but they were oddly endearing.

He looked up toward the peaceful moon. She liked his haiku. He could not help but feel gratification. He was beginning to think up a haiku now " about Chizuru. He did not usually write humorous haiku, but this one came quite naturally.

Toshizo checked to make sure that no one was around and cleared his throat gruffly. Chizuru gave him her attention.

He recited:

"Crimson silk layers
>But speech reminiscent of
An Edo woman."

Chizuru's cheeks flamed.

"Hijikata-san!" she protested. "You are teasing me!"

"Do you not like it?" he asked stoically.

She muttered a few comments under her breath before finally responding, "I am honored to be thus immortalized in one of Hijikata-san's poems."

He could not help but smile faintly. "Very well. I suppose that it would be a pity to immortalize you thusly. It does not do you justice."

Toshizo turned so that he could look upon her more fully. Chizuru blushed again.

He amended his haiku:

"Crimson silk layers
>But a pale reflection of
Edo's true beauty."

Chizuru's heart skipped a beat. She was sure that even her neck was warm with blush. She glanced up at Toshizo's warm gaze before frantically looking away. She even hid half of her face in her sleeve, an uncharacteristically feminine move on her part, but such was the depth of her embarrassment.

"Hijikata-san is still teasing me. All of you have been teasing me ever since I put on this geiko costume!" she accused him.

He chuckled outwardly, but Toshizo was surprised at his own boldness. It was as Chizuru said. It was that getup of hers. It made all the men " not just him " want to look at her again and again. She was very beautiful when thus dressed as a woman, though in truth he had

thought her lovely to begin with. Her inner strength and determination were attractive. Her facial features, pleasing. Her petite figureâ€|

Toshizo decided that he had best end this train of thought. It was for this very reason that he had resolved that Chizuru should remain in men's clothing. Women provided distraction for men, and now was not a time for distractions. Perhaps one day the time would come when it would be appropriate for him â€" and the others â€" to pursue distractions, but not now.

Toshizo turned back towards the garden. Well, if Chizuru had any hopes, he should not encourage them. Every once in a while, he caught glimpses of what he thought might be affection in her eyes, but it was best not to dwell on such things.

"It is about time that you can retire for the night," he said decidedly. His tone signaled to Chizuru that their moment together was ended.

She sighed. Oftentimes Hijikata-san would be gentle and open with her briefly, but then suddenly change his attitude and become aloof and stern once again. Chizuru wondered what he was thinking.

"Yes," she responded obediently, getting up.

He offered her a hand to help her balance as she stepped into her high geiko shoes without looking back at her.

"I will escort you to your room."

"Yes," she murmured.

Their walk to her room was swift and in silence. They did not bump into anyone on the way.

When Toshizo left her to enter her room with only a brief nod, Chizuru could not help herself. She wanted him to look back at her one more time.

"Hijikata-san?" Chizuru called out.

He paused, but did not turn back. "What is it?"

"Thank you," she said sincerely. "For the poem. It was very wonderful."

After a few seconds, Toshizo turned his gaze back towards her.

"You are welcome," he said, keeping the smile that threatened to spread across his face at bay. With that, he left.

That night, Chizuru dreamt a blissful dream of taking a walk through her hometown of Edo with Hijikata-san. In her dream, he was generous with his smiles and gentleness.

A room away, Toshizo blew out his candle after carefully hiding his newest poem in the small notebook on his desk. His dreams took him back to Shimabara, where a lovely geiko from Edo served him tea while shyly leaning against his shoulder.

****Owari****

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><p>Thank you for reading. Please leave a review!<p>

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file.